

**Intermediate First Place – Annalise W., Pinellas County*

Mangroves' Night

In the deep of the mangroves
The swamp awakens
A firefly blinks
As the daylight shrinks

When roots' decline marks the waterline
Anew a span of shoreline slime
On cue the creatures of mud and brine
Emerge in a bustling flood

Here comes spineless worms and snails
Drawing complex lines on the spongy ground
Foraging for food their hunger to sate
But by next tide all paths unwound

The tiny crab with the giant claw
A fiddler crab dancing a jig
He waves his claw for all to adore
Seen by other males it'll end in war

A raccoon stalks the shallows of the bay
Hoping a fish will stray his way
He leaps with a giant splash
And so frightens all the fish away

The firefly's blinking recedes
As dawn creeps forward
The animals of the night retreat
To start anew when night repeats

**Intermediate Second Place – Katherine R., Duval County*

“The Florida Six”

Reddish-brown with spots shaped like an hourglass,
The Copperhead's bite comes with painfulness.

Red and black divided by yellow bands,
The Coral Snake's venom can ruin plans.

Light and dark brown crossbands will make them known,
Cottonmouths just want to be left alone.

It's small, but don't underestimate it,
The Dusky Pygmy should not be messed with.

Diamonds run along this snake that's brown gray,
The EDB's rattle means go away.

Gray with a thin stripe going down its back,
A Timber Rattler's bite can make you pack.

Although you may think that they're dangerous,
These snakes do not really endanger us.

In fact, they keep ecosystems in check,
So I think that they deserve our respect.

**Intermediate Third Place – Victoria T., Pinellas County*

Embers and Ashes

Fires of varying intensities
in lands beyond the cities
burn bright for all the plants to see.
The endeavor is to refresh the pine trees.

From scrubs to flatwoods.
it regenerates green goods;
protecting fireproof plants time after time,
meaning the young longleaf and southern slash pine.

Flammable needles fall by the pound,
keeping the groundcover on the ground.
In different sites, flames come and go,
rising frequently or being occasional.

The locals stay safe by burning the invasive.
Without fire we wouldn't have the native.
Just letting you know that flames are reactive;
to our ecosystem, it is never unrelated.

**Intermediate Honorable Mention – Annika B., Sumter County*

A Sonnet About Nature

About the hooting owls and wrens that tweet,
About the coyotes and foxes sly.
About the honeysuckle's nectar sweet,
About the little scrub-jay flying by.

About the cottontails and hares that hop,
About the fruitful fig trees for their food.
About the moles from the holes going POP!
About the laurel oak trees for their wood.

I flap my arms in a mirroring beat,
Craning up at the moon, I howl and cry.
I sneak a taste of a blossoming treat,
I imagine soaring up in the sky.

Nature is the environment I see,
But nature is also a part of me.